

CHAPTER 9

SECTION 3.1

PRIME AND STATUS CHANGES

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I. POLICY

A. Generally, when the TRICARE/CHAMPUS eligibility status changes, eligibility for TRICARE Prime benefits also changes. The time frames for Prime eligibility parallel TRICARE/CHAMPUS eligibility.

B. In all cases, when TRICARE/CHAMPUS eligibility ends, eligibility for Prime ceases. This includes retirees, their family members and survivors who turn age 65 and are entitled to Medicare but are not eligible for TRICARE for Life, dependent children who lose TRICARE/CHAMPUS eligibility due to age, remarriage of former spouses, etc.

C. To have continuous Prime Coverage, the enrollee shall submit an enrollment form to the contractor before retirement or separation and pay the appropriate enrollment fees within the required time frames. Active duty personnel who retire or separate may enroll at the same time as the remaining **eligible** family members.

1. If this is not done prior to retirement or separation, enrollment **or reenrollment** will be effective according to the provisions of [Chapter 9, Section 2.1, paragraph I.A.4](#).

2. If the enrollee is receiving ongoing care at the time of retirement or separation, he/she must comply with all of the care authorization requirements of the enrollee's new status including getting a new authorization from the managed care support contractor, even though the care may have been previously authorized by the Military Medical Support Office.

D. When an enrollee who has a change in status fails to notify the contractor but submits claims, the contractor will disenroll the beneficiary from Prime (as of the date of his/her change in status), apply TRICARE standard cost sharing and deductible, and notify the enrollee of his/her status change and options for re-enrollment in Prime.

E. When status changes from active duty family member to retiree family member, Prime enrollees shall be offered an opportunity to continue enrollment in Prime, but at the retiree cost-sharing rates. These enrollees must pay the applicable enrollment fees. Upon payment of fees, the enrollees will be given a new enrollment period. Beneficiaries shall be permitted to keep their Primary Care Manager (PCM), if possible. The Lead Agents and Military Treatment Facility (MTF) Commanders shall determine if retiring beneficiaries who

enroll in Prime could keep their MTF PCMs, given the MTF's enrollment plan and MTF capacity.

F. Family members of an active duty member who dies while on active duty are authorized to maintain active duty family member status for three years after the death of the member. These individuals are not distinguished from other active duty family members for Prime eligibility. The date of death must be on or after October 30, 1997. Contractors are not required to research their files. If previous claims are brought to the attention of the contractor, the contractor shall readjudicate the claim in accordance with this policy.

NOTE: The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 authorized an additional two-year period for survivors of deceased active duty members to remain eligible at the active duty family member rates. Prior to the FY 2001 Act, family members of a deceased active duty member maintained eligibility for one year after the death of the member.

G. In situations where an active duty member's rank changes (from E-4 to E-5 or above), family members who are enrolled in Prime maintain their cost-sharing status until the end of their current enrollment period. At the anniversary date, enrollees can make a decision to continue enrollment in Prime (with the new cost-sharing) or disenroll. The "new cost sharing" provision is moot for services provided on or after April 1, 2001, since the cost share for all Prime active duty family members is \$0, regardless of rank.

H. When an active duty member retires other than the first of the month or a member separates other than the first of the month but continues to be eligible (e.g., is the spouse of an active duty member; or is eligible for TAMP), Prime enrollment may continue as of the date of retirement or separation so long as all enrollment requirements have been met as stated in [Chapter 9, Section 2.1, paragraph I.A.4](#).

I. When TRICARE Prime enrollment changes from an individual to a family enrollment status prior to annual renewal for beneficiary categories required to pay an enrollment fee, the unused portion (pro-rated on a monthly basis) of the fee will be applied toward a new 12 month enrollment period.

1. For active duty family members, single enrollment can be changed to family at any time during the enrollment period. A new enrollment period shall be established for the family.

2. In cases of a change from single status to family based on the birth of a child or adoption, the new family member of the Prime enrollee will be considered enrolled as of the day of birth or adoption and given up to 120 days to decide whether to continue Prime or disenroll the child. For retirees or their family members or survivors who decide to continue enrollment for the child, the unused portion (pro-rated on a monthly basis) of the single enrollment fee they paid will be applied toward a new 12 month family enrollment period. For newborns and newly adopted children enrolled under this provision, Point of Service cost-sharing does not apply through the 120th day or until an enrollment decision is made by a responsible representative, whichever is earlier. All services shall be processed with the Prime copayment even in the absence of referrals or authorizations.

NOTE: The automatic enrollment in Prime of a new family member does not apply in the case of a reservist who has been called to active duty for a period of less than 31 days, since the dependents of the reservist are not eligible to enroll in Prime.

J. When a family enrollment status changes to single, there is no refund of the paid enrollment fee. The remaining single enrollee continues to have Prime coverage until the enrollee takes action to disenroll, the enrollee is no longer eligible for TRICARE Prime, or the enrollee fails to pay a required enrollment fee.

K. TRICARE/CHAMPUS eligible beneficiaries who have less than 12 months of eligibility remaining (for example, retirees who are 64 years of age, TAMP beneficiaries, etc.) are allowed to enroll in Prime, however, these enrollees will be disenrolled from Prime when they lose their TRICARE/CHAMPUS eligibility. The beneficiary has the choice of paying all of the enrollment fee, which is not refundable, or paying the fees on a quarterly basis. If paid on a quarterly basis, the beneficiary will be required to pay the installments that would cover the period of their eligibility only.

L. Enrollees may disenroll from TRICARE prime according to the requirements of [Chapter 9, Section 2.1](#). (Refer to TRICARE Operations Manual for information on enrollment fees related to a sponsor change from retired status to active duty status.)

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